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REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Sonnets of Milton. With Introduction and Notes. By JOHN S. SMART. Glasgow: Maclehose, Jackson & Co., 1921. Pp. xlv+195.

This is an important book. Students of Italian and English sonnet literature will find in its Introduction a sane analysis of the sonnet tradition, with much to awaken their minds from the sterile criticisms based on Petrarch and Dante as the unfailing standards of that art. Students of Milton alone or of the seventeenth century will find the critical comments on separate sonnets original and illuminating. All will be impressed with the method of printing documentary evidence in an appendix rather than amid the expository material.

Recent studies of Milton's poetry emphasize the changes in form and substance as he passed from Cambridge to Horton and thereafter into public life in London. The chief end in view has been to date the early poems as accurately as possible. Mr. Smart has aided these investigations materially. His effective parallels between the dated Latin poems and lines in the sonnet "O Nightingale, That on Yon Bloomy Spray" enforce a belief that the poem is a literary exercise of the Cambridge period. By other processes he assigns the Italian sonnets to the same term of years. Unquestionably while at Cambridge, Milton was an imitative workman. He turned slowly toward independent work, but having once turned wrote with unmistakable originality. Contemporary allusions make evident the date of composition for poems of the London period; now a use of methods valuable in Shakspeare criticism is giving probable dates to the Milton poems of imitative sort.

In the field of personal identification, much excellent work has established Edward Lawrence as the object of the sonnet "Lawrence, of Virtuous Father, Virtuous Son"; use of the Oldenburg letters at Burlington house as union of Milton with Edward, instead of Henry, is the prettiest bit of documentary proof in the entire book. Equally strong evidence makes the sonnet "On the Religious Memory of Mrs. Catharine Thomason" a tribute to the wife of George Thomason, the noteworthy collector of contemporary pamphlets. A less satisfying assertion of identity makes Thomas Randolph displace Cowley as the cause of Milton's eighth line in the sonnet on his twenty-third birthday. This seems needless search for literal reference, as the Cowley explanation has long seemed to modern critics. There is a strong contrast in Mr. Smart's destruction of the associations given to the Italian sonnets,

wherein critics have seen need to discover "the dark lady" and consequently have ridden hard for a fall. The grounds shown for Milton's "Donna leggiadra" couplet will satisfy present questioners; also, the evidence here prepares for the attribution that the editor confidently expects to make of all the Italian sonnets to inspiration from an "Emilia" resident in London. Like many other scholars, Mr. Smart accepts the Italian pieces as early work.

These are representative examples of the literary and documentary phases of Mr. Smart's exposition. Much discussion will arise through his use of evidence from Fazio degli Uberti and Giovanni della Casa to demonstrate Milton's conception of the sonnet form. Every scholar, however, will welcome this examination of the sonnet form in English literary history, for Mr. Smart has definite proof of his assertions. The classicist Milton seems well relieved from that old burden put upon him for ignoring the relation of lines to sentences, for disregarding presumed principles of Italian sonnet form. Here again appear the methods of careful scholarship in testing established assertions.

Owners of the book will welcome one addition—a word regarding the present location of Milton's own copy of Giovanni della Casa's sonnets. At the foot of page 33 Mr. Smart has a note regarding its supposed disappearance. The book is now in the possession of the New York Public Library.

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Shakspeare to Sheridan. A Book About the Theatre of Yesterday and Today. By ALWIN THALER. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922. Pp. xviii+339.

Among the works dealing with English literary history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Professor Alwin Thaler's recent volume on the theater from Shakspeare to Sheridan merits a distinguished place. Our libraries contain many older books on eighteenth-century literature with little in them except anecdotes and trivial comment. These are the works of journeymen in criticism satisfying a demand for literary small talk. At one time these brief chroniclers possessed the field, and scholars, busy in older periods, were indifferent toward the eighteenth century. Particularly in the field of drama, constructive research work was rare. Recent years have seen a salutary change. Nettleton and Bernbaum on dramatic history, Odell on the Shakspeare tradition, and now Thaler on the theater itself are among the careful workmen who have made the eighteenth century their field for intensive critical study. They have traced the changes in English drama from the Commonwealth period to the time when prose fiction